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Igniting Innovation: Progress and a Path Forward for Wildfire Policy

Tuesday, March 03, 2026

About EESI



Nonpartisan Educational Resources for Policymakers

A bipartisan Congressional caucus founded EESI in 1984 to provide nonpartisan information on environmental, energy, and climate policies



Direct Assistance for Equitable and Inclusive Financing Program

In addition to a full portfolio of federal policy work, EESI provides direct assistance to utilities to develop “on-bill financing” programs



Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

We recognize that systemic barriers impede fair environmental, energy, and climate policies and limit the full participation of Black, Indigenous, people of color, and legacy and frontline communities in decision-making



Sustainable Solutions

Our mission is to advance science-based solutions for climate change, energy, and environmental challenges in order to achieve our vision of a sustainable, resilient, and equitable world

Policymaker Education



Briefings and Webcasts

Live, in-person and online public briefings, archived recordings, and written summaries

Climate Change Solutions



Bi-weekly newsletter with everything policymakers and concerned citizens need to know, including a legislation and hearings tracker



Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs

Timely, objective coverage of environmental, clean energy, and climate change topics



Social Media (@EESIonline)

Active engagement on Bluesky, Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and YouTube





EESI
Environmental and
Energy Study Institute

FAS

FEDERATION
OF AMERICAN
SCIENTISTS

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Tuesday, March 03, 2026



FROM Los Angeles TO DC A PHOTO JOURNEY OF THE 2025 LA FIRES

Presentation by
Kelly Martin
Wildland Fire Advisor, Megafire Action
March 3, 2026

WHITE BIRD VFD - IDAHO TASKFORCE #4





HOME HARDENING

Homeowner responsibility



CHALLENGES

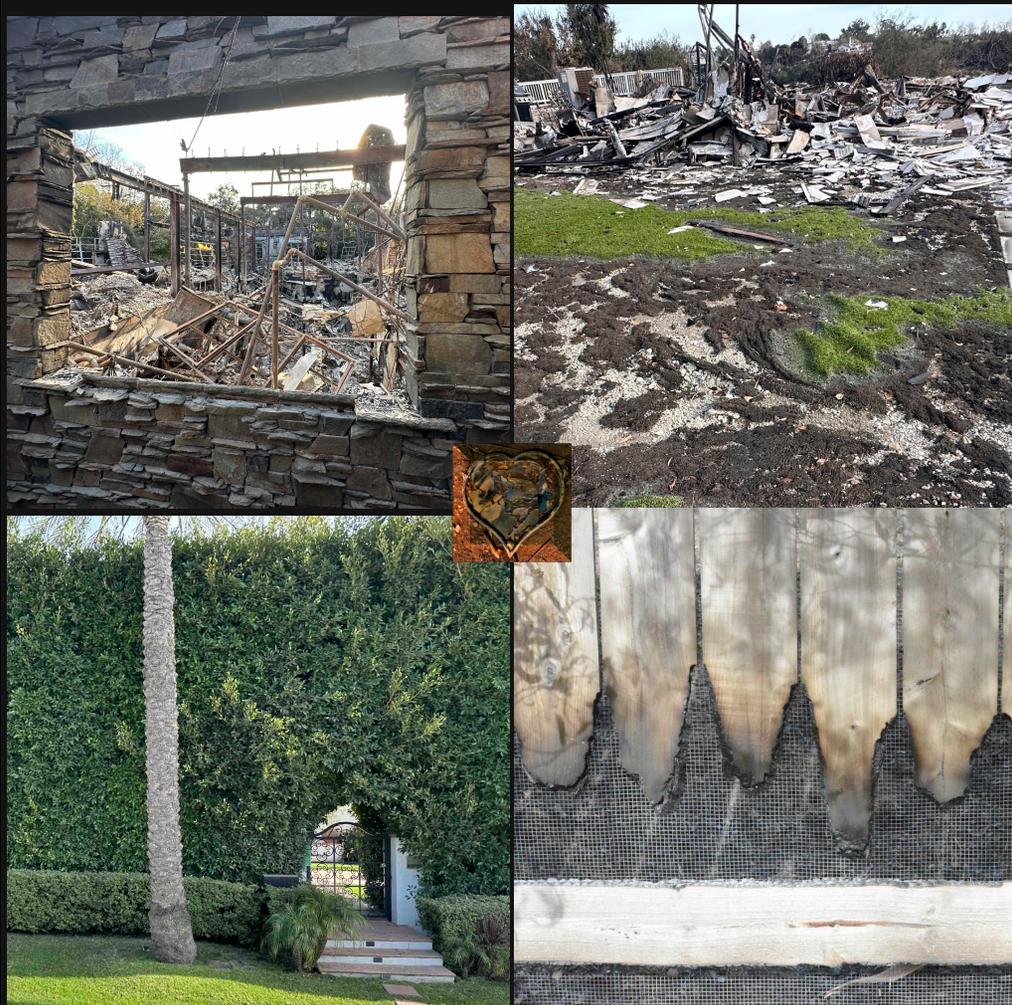
- **Cost and financial burden:** significant expense particularly low-income or marginalized populations
- **Voluntary vs. Regulatory requirements:** Permitting for renovations costly and time consuming
- **Yearly ongoing maintenance:** defensible space, costs and labor

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ **Proven effectiveness:** roofing material, siding, double pane windows
- ✓ **Economic resilience:** reduce potential future losses
- ✓ **Technological innovation:** Improved building materials and designs
- ✓ **Federal/State Tax relief and low interest loans:** Increase incentives for homeowners

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Homeowner responsibility



CHALLENGES

- Ongoing maintenance: defensible space, costs and labor
- Interconnected burnable homes and fences: with highly flammable landscape vegetation
- Aesthetic and cultural resistance: Tall trees and shrubs offer a sense of privacy and seclusion

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Enhanced Property Value and Insurability
- ✓ Financial Assistance and Grants
- ✓ Modern "Fire-Scaping" Design
- ✓ Community Building

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS



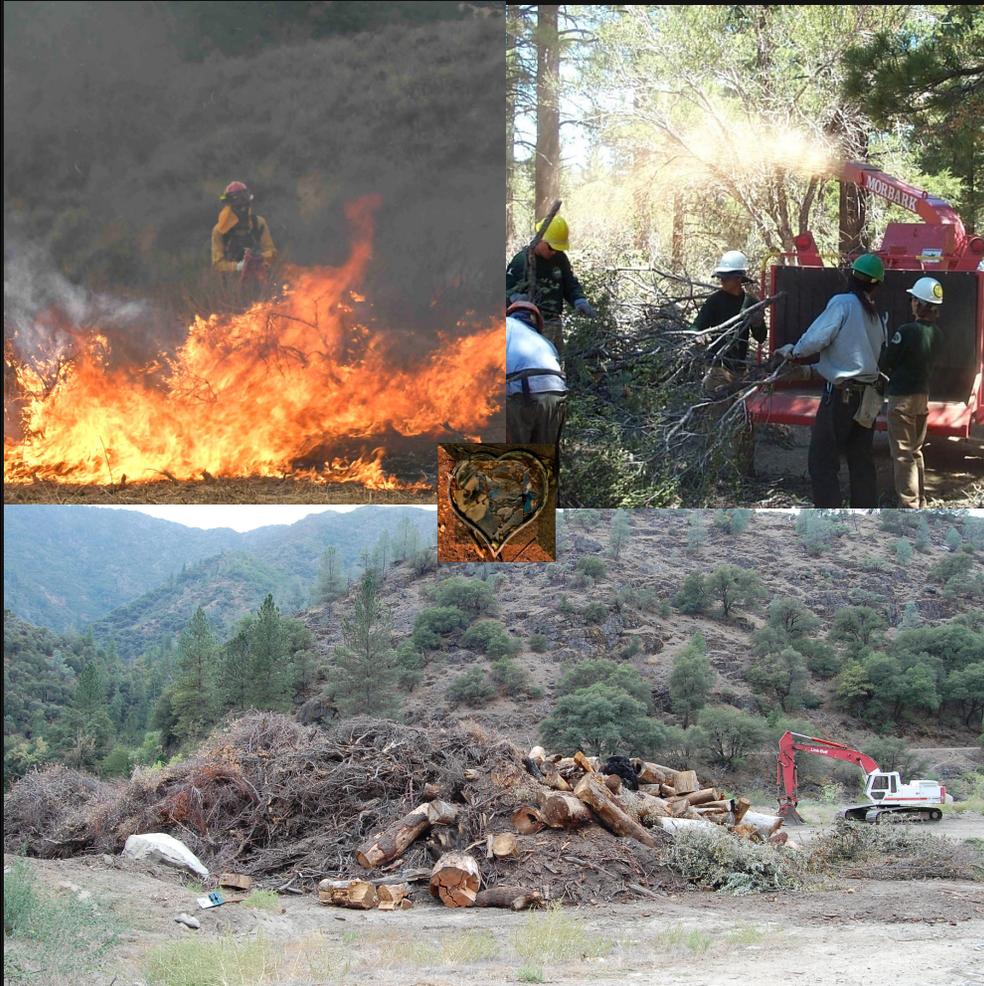
CHALLENGES

- **Infrastructure gaps:** access, egress, water, powerlines
- **Insurance inconsistency:** lack of measure and reward to lower premiums; dropped coverage
- **Overhead power lines:** broken poles and downed power lines limiting escape
- **Ingress and Egress:** narrow driveways, dense overstory trees, unsafe for residents and responders
- **Communication:** Notices and Evacuation orders

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Develop and implement area **specific building codes for developers** building in the WUI (home hardening materials), minimum road widths and turn arounds
- ✓ HOAs and CCRs that have **strong fire safe community standards**

WATERSHED & WUI TREATMENTS



CHALLENGES

- **Cost of treating the Threat / Defense Zone:** discretionary funding vs emergency funding
- **Lack of Workforce Labor sustainability and long-term commitment:** DOGE cuts, retirements = loss of institutional knowledge
- **Social and Aesthetic Resistance:** Aversion to smoke impacts and burned/treated landscapes
- **Operational Risks:** fear of fire and escapes

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ **Risk and Hazard Reduction:** Reduced fire behavior; fuel type changes
- ✓ **Landscape Resilience:** Rotational burning and thinning reduces fuel loading before next event
- ✓ **Federal Funding and Support:** promote 5-year funding cycles
- ✓ **Interagency Collaboration:** "It takes a village" identify and breakdown silos: local, state, fed, tribal
- ✓ **Technological Advancement:** Fire Intelligence Center
- ✓ **Legislation:** FOFA

- ✓ Current trajectory contributing INCREASING THE "FIRE DEFICIT" due to additional vegetation growth every year.
- ✓ Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) **community development continues to EXPAND INTO HIGH FIRE HAZARD** landscapes.
- ✓ Contemporary suppression strategies are INSUFFICIENT FOR SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES.
- ✓ Federal funding is primarily ALLOCATED TOWARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE becoming more costly and less effective
- ✓ Congress can EQUALIZE FUNDING, POLICY and INCENTIVES to support home hardening, maintaining defensible space, community planning, prevention, and active forest and brush management.
- ✓ Redirect the national wildfire strategy from a pattern of destruction and rebuilding toward ONE OF LIVING WITH FIRE.

COMMUNITIES ON FIRE

CONFLAGRATIONS AND THE CHANGES WE NEED





COMMUNITY IMPACTS





2016 Gatlinburg, Tennessee (Photo by Maj. Randy Harris, TN National Guard)



2020 Alameda Fire, Oregon (Photo by OR Dept. of Transportation)



2023 Lahaina Fire, Hawaii (Photo by State Farm, CC by 2.0)



2017 Tubbs Fire, California (Photo by CA National Guard)

CONFLAGRATIONS ARE NOT NEW

Historical precedent

- 1666 London Fire
- 1820s Boston Fires
- 1871 Great Chicago Fire

I.M. Gianmmanco, F. Hedayati, S.R. Hawks, X.S. Monroy & E. Sluder, The return of conflagration in our built environment. IBHS Wildfire Research Report. https://ibhs.org/wp-content/uploads/Suburban_Wildfire_Conflagration_WhitePaper.pdf (2023).

Significant, and increasing, impacts

- Proportion of buildings exposed to wildfire that were ultimately destroyed more than tripled from 2002-2022.
- Destruction rates increased in all vegetation types.

A.R. Carlson, T.J. Hawbaker, M.H. Mockrin, V.C. Radeloff, L.S. Bair, M.D. Caggiano, J.R. Meldrum, P.M. Alexandre, H.A. Kramer, & P.F. Steblein, Rising rates of wildfire building destruction in the conterminous United States, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 122 (51) e2505886122, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2505886122> (2025).

Challenging conditions exacerbate impacts

- Often wind driven
- Heavy damage in first 12 hours after ignition

D.E. Calkin, K. Barrett, J.D. Cohen, M.A. Finney, S.J. Pyne, & S.L. Quarles, Wildland-urban fire disasters aren't actually a wildfire problem. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 120 (51), e2315797120, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2315797120> (2023).



STRUCTURE IGNITION FACTORS

Home damage is driven by a number of factors, including (but not limited to):

- Structure composition
- Surrounding vegetation
- Proximity to other structures
- Position on the landscape
- Fire behavior and intensity

Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety. IBHS Primer Series on Wildfire: Part Two The Built Environment, https://ibhs.org/wp-content/uploads/member_docs/wildfire-primer-series-part-2_environment.pdf (2020).

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Not all of these things are in the direct control of the building owner.

And... information deficit isn't the problem.

Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety. IBHS Primer Series on Wildfire: Part Two The Built Environment, https://ibhs.org/wp-content/uploads/member_docs/wildfire-primer-series-part-2_environment.pdf (2020).

I.M. Gianmmanco, F. Hedayati, S.R. Hawks, X.S. Monroy & E. Sluder, The return of conflagration in our built environment. IBHS Wildfire Research Report. https://ibhs.org/wp-content/uploads/Suburban_Wildfire_Conflagration_WhitePaper.pdf (2023).



WILDFIRE REQUIRES COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Insurance issues are indicators of risk
- Sustainable insurance depends on
 - Accessibility
 - Affordability
 - Reliability
- Individual action matters, but community-wide action drives down risk in measurable ways

“When insurance becomes widely unavailable, unaffordable, or both, a necessary part of any effective solution is to reduce the risk.”

N. Watkins, P. Brinkman, & Rehan Siddique, State of insurance for wildfires: Issue brief on behalf of Alliance for Wildfire Resilience. Milliman, https://alliancewr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/9-2-25_State-of-Insurance-for-Wildfires.pdf (2025).



SOLUTIONS

Fix Our Forests Act represents progress.

- Creation of a community wildfire risk reduction program
- Extension of Community Wildfire Defense Grants to include home hardening
- Fire intelligence that works for the built environment AND the natural environment

More work is needed.

- Modeling conflagration risk
- Water availability
- Public health



NEED TO REFRAME WILDFIRE

More than land management

- Conflagrations in the built environment
- Risk reduction for all impacts (public health, structure ignition, evacuation and more)

More than traditional partners

- Public health community
- Insurance industry
- Non-forested landscape interests
- Mitigation and recovery workforce

Innovative and cross-cutting solutions

- New committees of Congress
- New alliances
- Integrated approaches



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Action is not a binary choice.

It isn't a matter of protecting communities OR supporting resilient landscapes.

We must do both.



BETTER WILDFIRE POLICY, TOGETHER.

GET INVOLVED.



ANNIE SCHMIDT

ANNIE@ALLIANCEWR.ORG
509.630.2836





PANEL DISCUSSION

Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire

Sara A. Clark

Igniting Innovation:

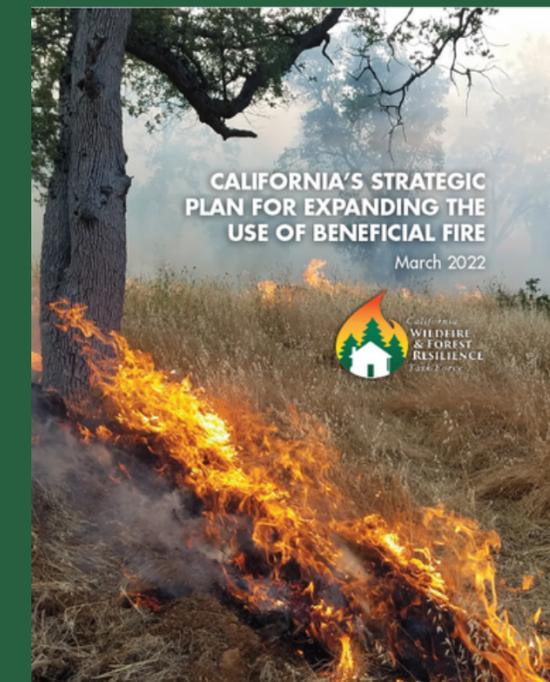
Progress and a Path Forward for Wildfire Policy

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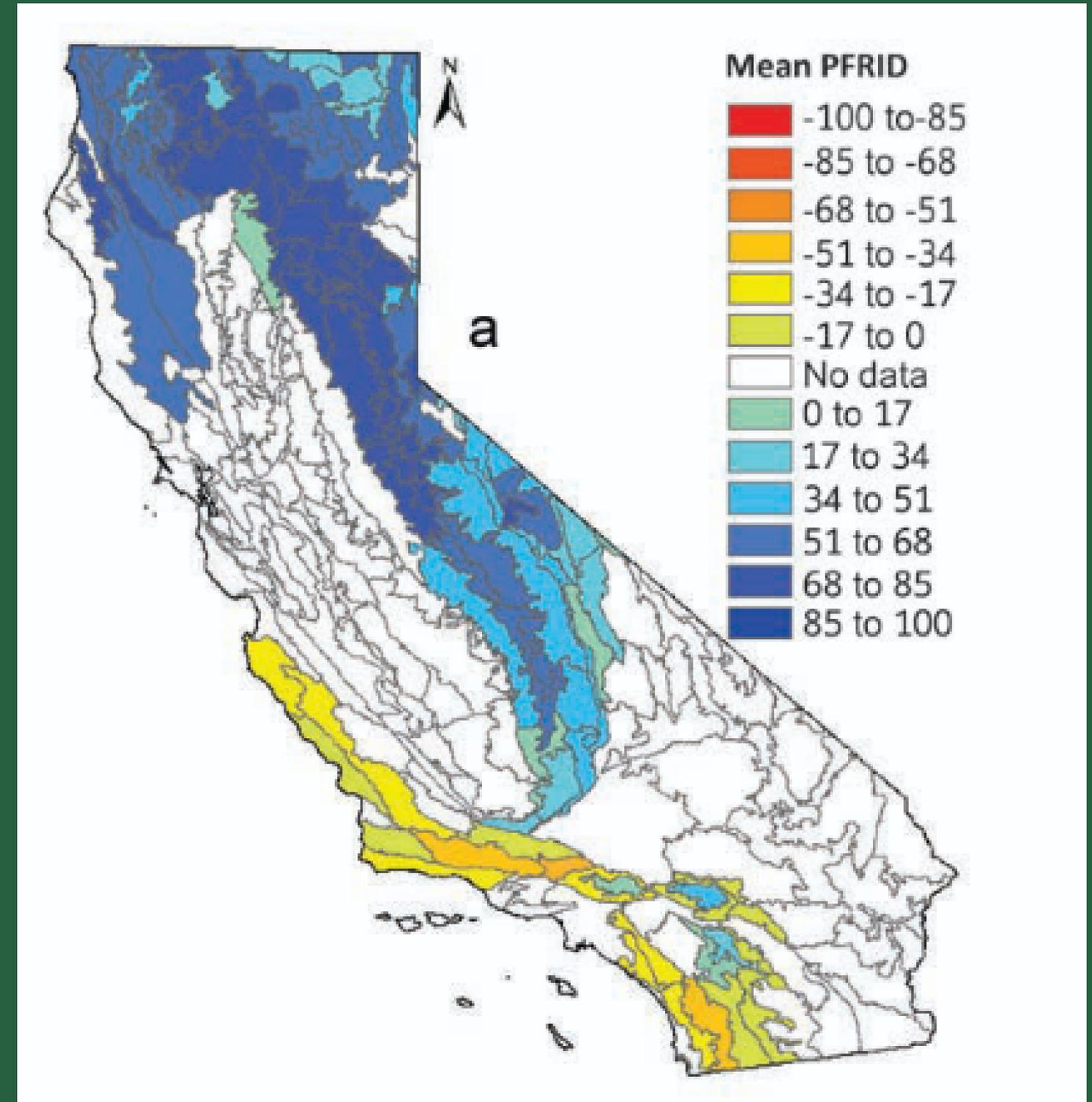
My Background

- Assist prescribed burn associations, Tribes, land trusts, and local agencies implement prescribed fire projects
- Lead Author of Good Fire I and II
- Helped draft multiple CA laws on prescribed fire liability and cultural burning
- Part of advisory group to establish California's claims fund
- Lead facilitator for California's Strategic Plan to Expand the Use of Beneficial Fire
- Subject Matter Expert for Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission



Why Beneficial Fire?

- **Prescribed Fire:** The intentional application of fire to land for wildland management goals. Prescribed fires are typically conducted in compliance with a written prescribed fire plan that outlines the conditions necessary for the burn to be “within prescription.” Regulated by state and federal law.
- **Cultural Burning:** The intentional application of fire to land by Tribes, Tribal organizations, or cultural fire practitioners to achieve cultural goals or objectives. Cultural burning can differ from prescribed fire in terms of size, seasonality, timing, prepping/planning, and post-fire treatment. Regulated by Tribal law and Indigenous Knowledge.
- **Wildfire Managed for Resource Benefit:** The strategic choice to manage unplanned ignitions to achieve management objectives, such as ecosystem restoration or hazard reduction. Fire managed for resource benefit is typically deployed in wilderness areas, national parks, and other areas in public ownership under specific conditions or circumstances. It can also be referred to as “managed fire.”



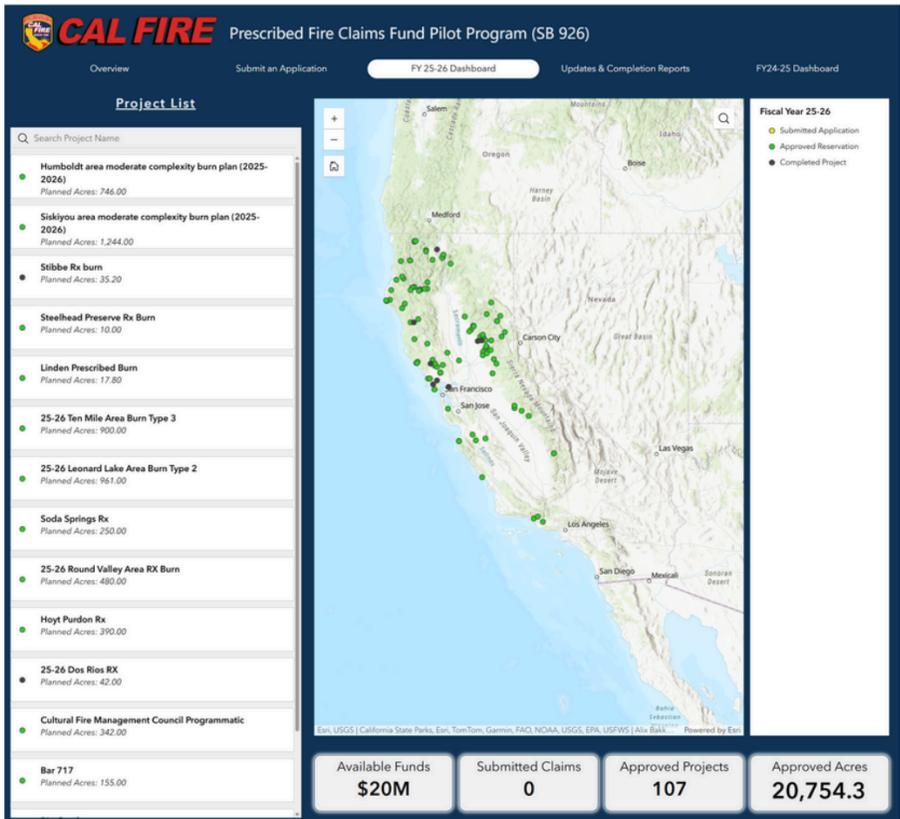
H. Safford et al., 2014. Using fire return interval departure (FRID) analysis to map spatial and temporal changes in fire frequency on national forest lands in California, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station

Addressing Liability Concerns

Establishment of Prescribed Fire Claims Funds



Modifications of liability standards and recoverable damages



Application of Federal Tort Claims Act coverage



Enabling Cultural Burning under Tribal Law

Recognizing Tribal
Sovereignty



Enabling agreements on
federally administered lands



Clarifying BIA role on Tribal
trust lands



Cutting the “Green Tape”

National Environmental
Policy Act Review



Clean Air Act & Exceptional
Events



Endangered Species Act





Earth Fire Alliance

Briefing: Progress and a Path Forward for Wildfire Policy

Dr. Michael J. Falkowski

March 3, 2026



4 out of 5 of the world's most severe years for wildfire events have occurred **since 2020**.

1 in 6 Americans now live in areas of significant wildfire risk.
Technology adoption is not keeping pace with the growing problem.



Earth Fire Alliance

Observe. Serve. Conserve.

A 501c3 nonprofit coalition
dedicated to delivering
transformative data from all
wildfires on Earth.



FireSat

A New Era in Fire Technology

A first-of-its-kind satellite
built specifically with and for
the global wildfire
community.



Radical Collaboration Meets Rapid Action



Radical Collaboration

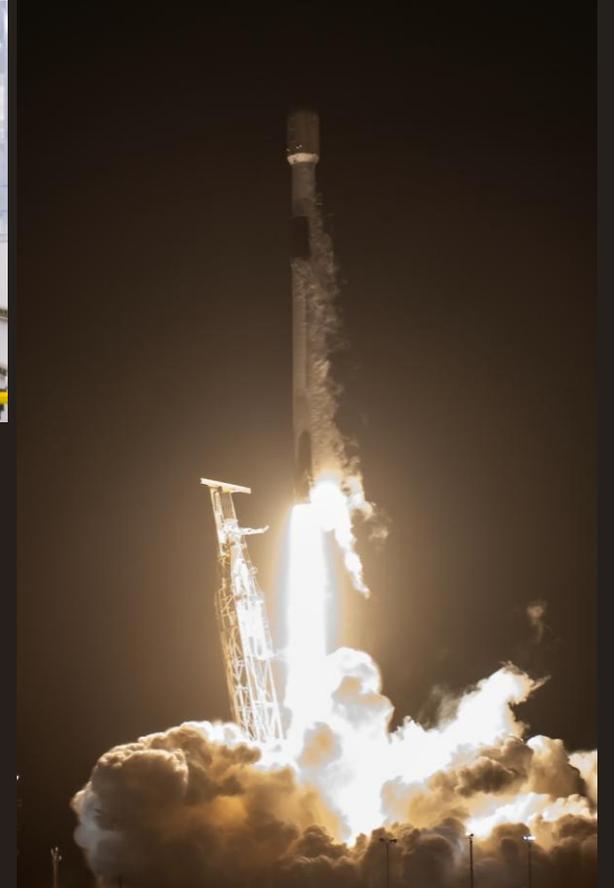
Aligning collective efforts for a common global good.



Rapid Action

Acting today to take advantage of leading-edge technology.





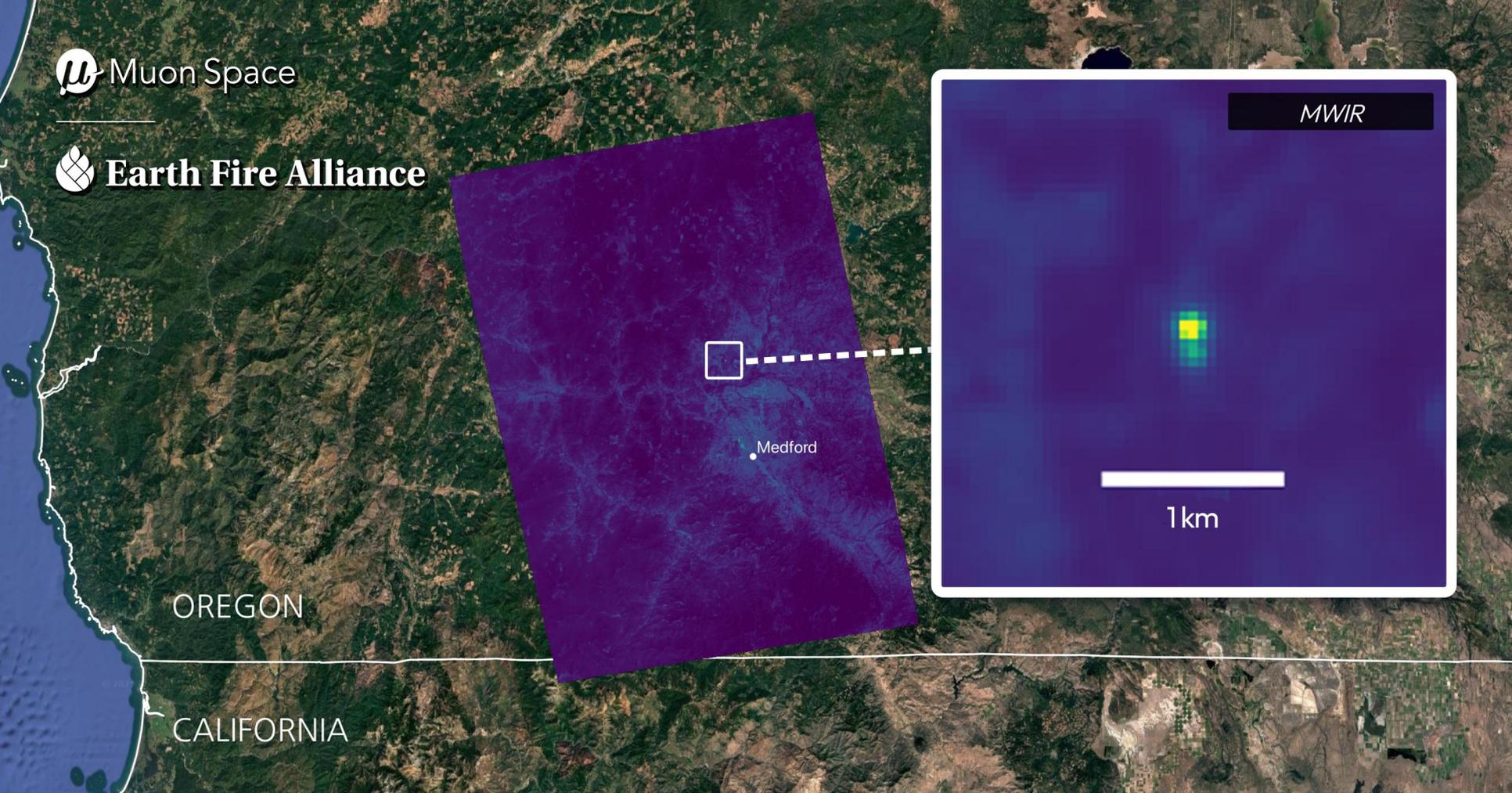


TABLE ROCK, OREGON — JUNE 23, 2025: FireSat detected a small, roadside grass fire undetected by other satellites.

Table Rock Fire, Oregon

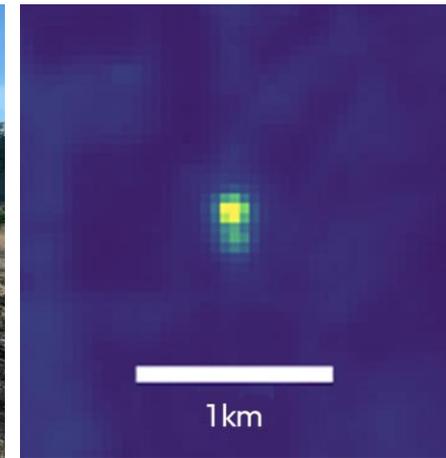
FireSat will augment and integrate with the existing fire tech ecosystem.



Ground-based camera view



Local media photo



FireSat detects active fire front

FireSat Overview

Early Detection

Identifies fires as small as **5x5m**, or about the size of a 1-car garage.

Rapid Data Refresh

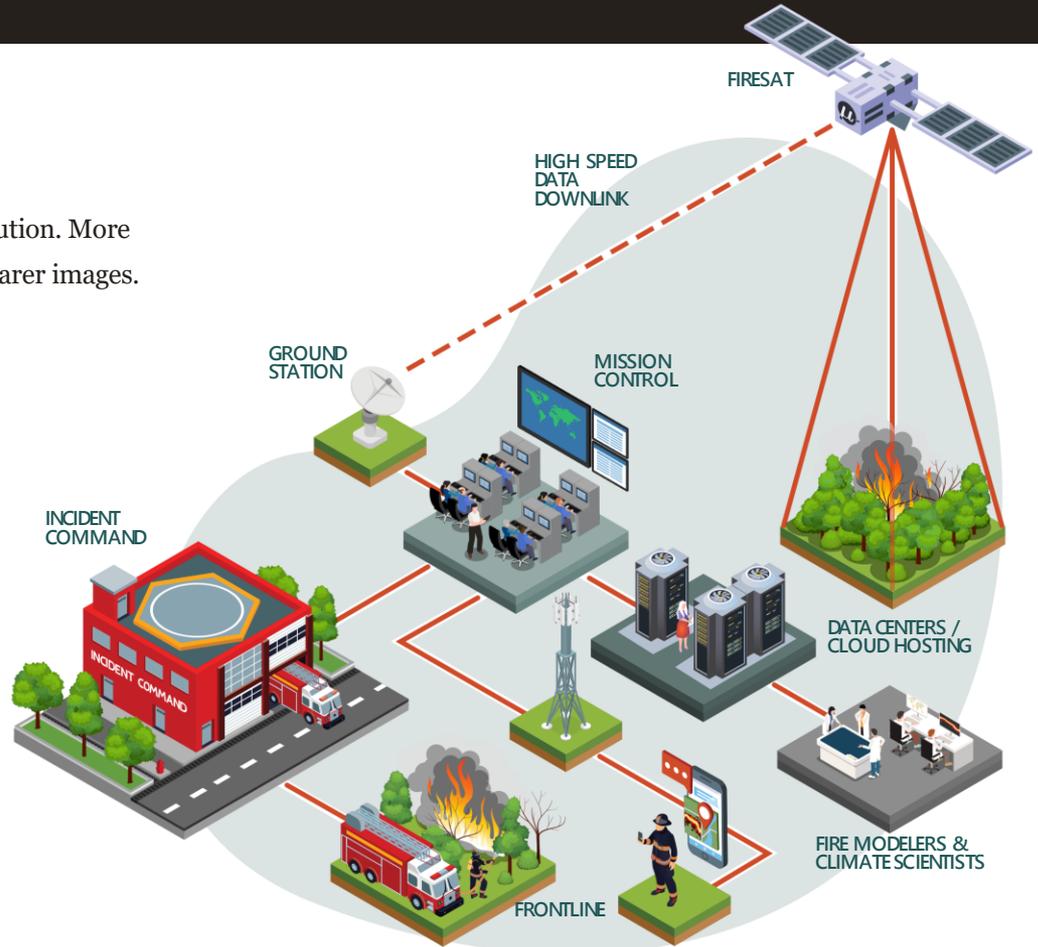
Twice daily revisit in 2026 scaling to global revisit of **20 minutes** or less by 2030.

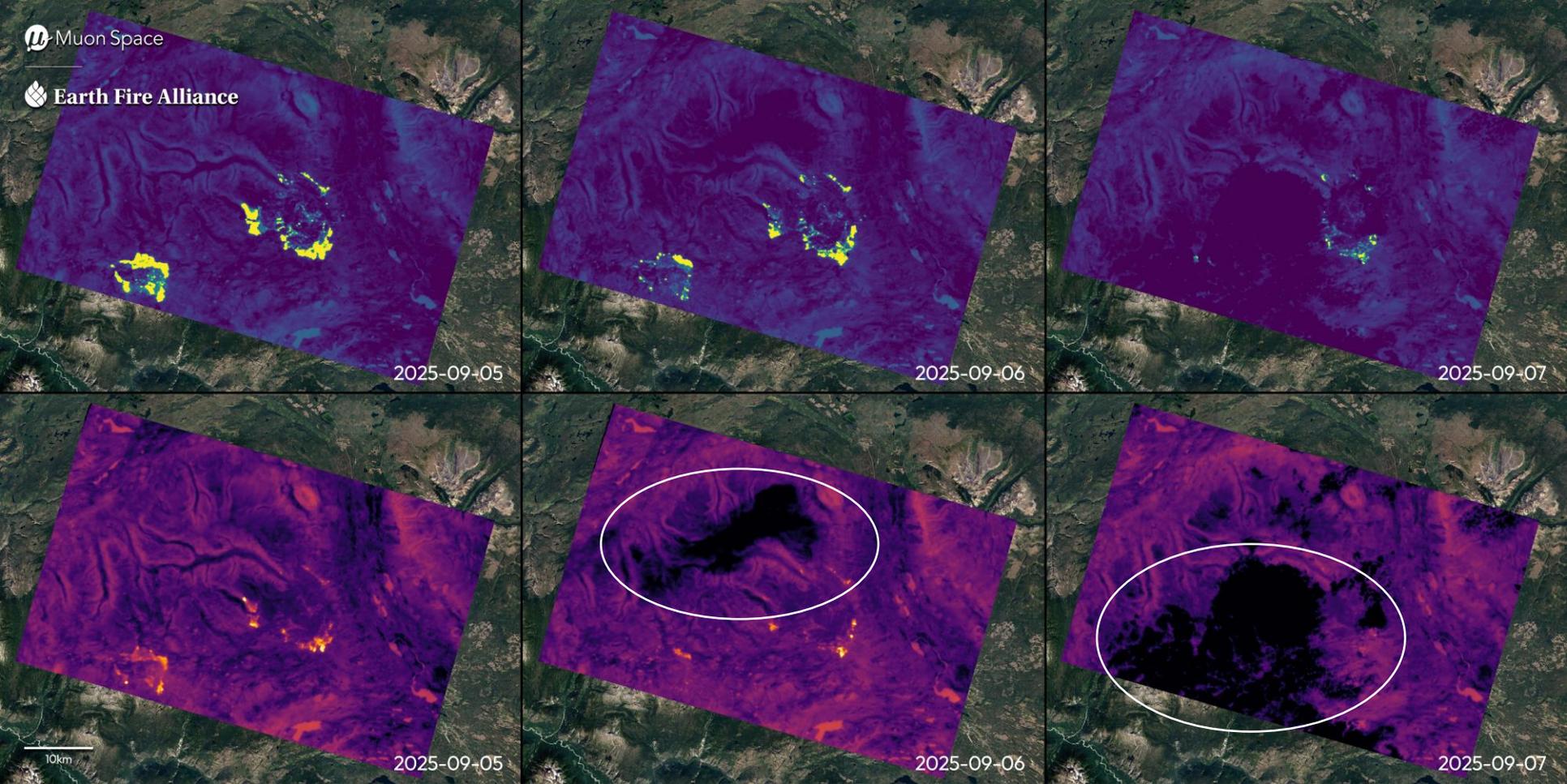
Highly Accurate

A low false positive rate of **<5%** ensures efficient resource allocation.

Detailed Resolution

80m average image resolution. More pixels = more data and clearer images.





BEEF TRAIL CREEK FIRE, BRITISH COLOMBIA — SEPT. 5-7, 2025: FireSat monitored the fire across 3 consecutive nights, showing its progression and significant reduction in intensity.

Petawanga Lake

Active Fire

MWIR

Active Fire

Petawanga Lake

2020 Burn Scar

LWIR

2025 Burn Scar

Petawanga Lake

2020 Burn Scar

False Color
(SWIR/NIR/Red)

5 km

Nipigon 6 Fire

**ONTARIO, CAN —
JUNE 15, 2025:**

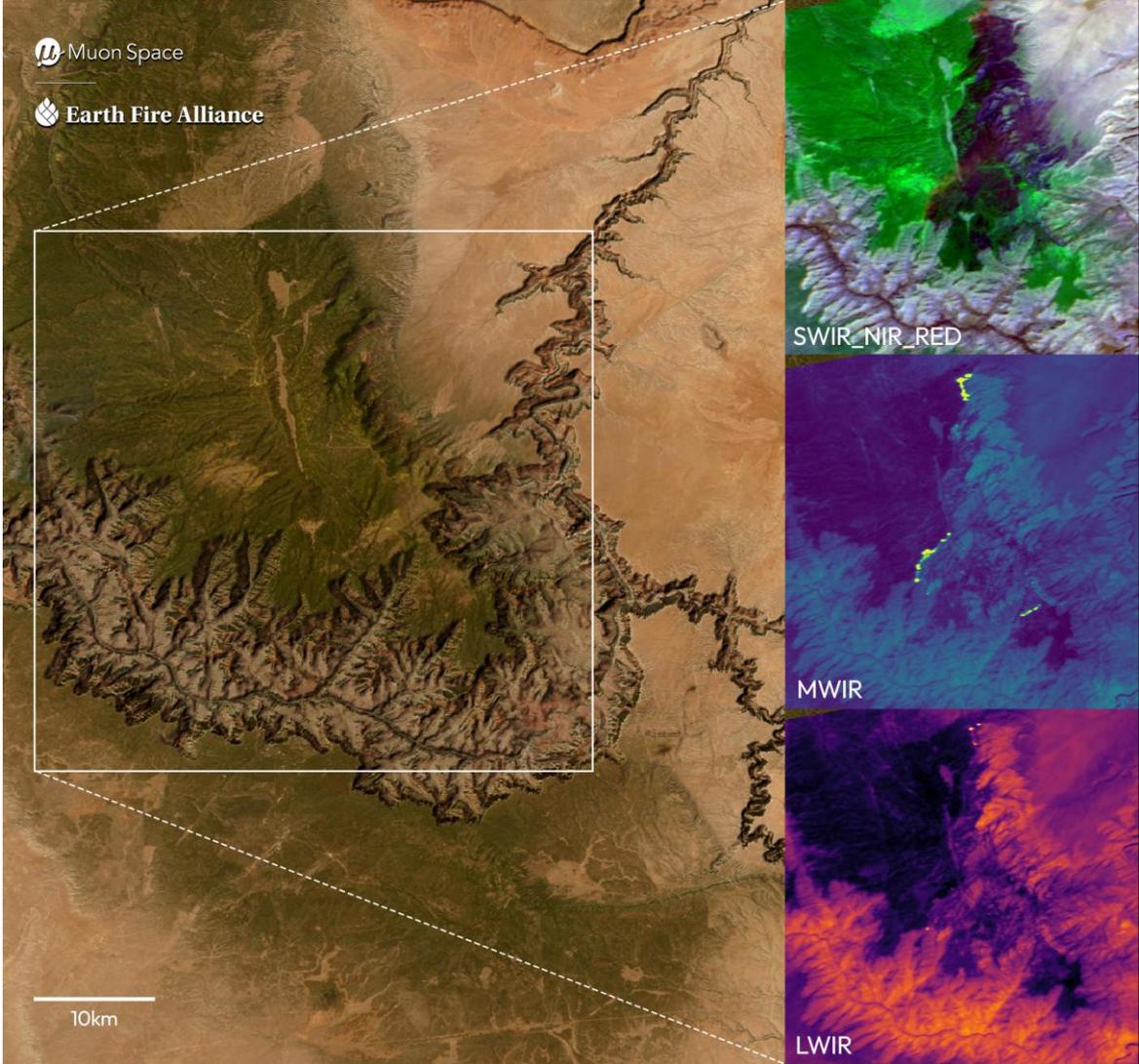
FireSat reveals both active fire fronts, demonstrating the ability to simultaneously monitor multiple wildfire events in remote regions.

Dragon Bravo Fire

GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA —

AUG. 2, 2025:

FireSat delivers complete wildfire intelligence in one integrated view.



Designed for interoperability with existing systems.



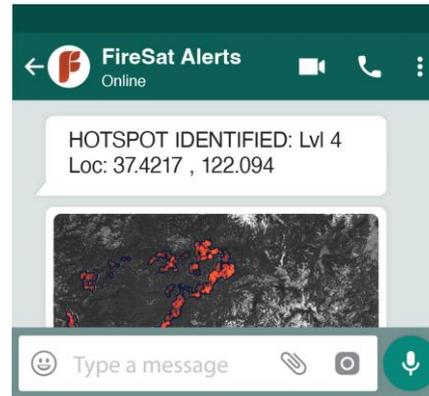
**Fire
Perimeter**



**Fire
Progression**



**Fire
Radiative
Power**



**Hotspot
Identification**



FireSat Roadmap

Alliance begins to convene. EFA officially founded in 2024.

2022 - 2024



Design, Build, Test

Cross-community planning and system requirements definition

Philanthropy supports Initial Operational Capability

2025



1 Satellite Protoflight

Risk reduction and data testing with Early Adopters

2026



3 Satellites Twice Daily Revisit

Coverage and data for key fire geographies

Government funding and data revenue will support Full Operational Capability.

2030



~ 20 Satellites 1 hr Revisit

Unlocks significant impact targets



~ 50 Satellites 20 min Revisit

Global coverage and data distribution



Public-Private-Philanthropic Partnerships

We work with philanthropic, private industry, government, fire agency, and fire science collaborators.

Earth Fire Alliance Supporters



Patrick J McGovern
FOUNDATION



12 Early Adopters from 3 continents





Earth Fire Alliance

Observe. Serve. Conserve.

www.earthfirealliance.org